



AAC Publications

Various Ascents and Ski Descents above Baltoro and Biarchedi Glaciers

Pakistan, Karakoram, Baltoro Muztagh and Masherbrum Range

In the latter half of May, Sam Favret and Julien Herry (France) made a number of probable first ascents and ski descents from the Baltoro Glacier.

On the 20th, from a base camp at Lhungka (4,100m) on the north bank of the Baltoro, at the entrance to the Muztagh Glacier, the two climbed a northeast-facing couloir to a col at a Google Earth altitude of 5,130m (35°45'42.91"N, 76°17'38.73"E), immediately to the southeast of Lobsang Spire South (5,594m). The 800m couloir had an average angle of 30°–35°, with a top section of 40°, and was descended by skis and snowboard.

The same pair visited the Biarchedi Glacier on May 23 and almost made the first ascent of the couloir that leads to the gap between Nuating I (5,868m) and II (5,860m). The jagged Nuating Group separates the lower Biarchedi Glacier from the Mitre (a.k.a. Nuating) Glacier. The high col, at around 5,630m, lies at approximately 35°42'23.41"N, 76°28'9.95"E. Favret and Herry climbed the 600m southwest-facing couloir (35°–40° until two-thirds height, then 45° in the final third) to a point approximately 10m below the capping cornice, then turned around due to incoming bad weather and skied and snowboarded the descent. None of the three Nuating peaks appears to have received a (recorded) ascent, although in 1990 a team of Italians reached a point on the east ridge of Nuating I about 150m below the summit, having climbed 27 pitches of "considerable difficulty" (AAJ 1991).

On the 31st, Favret and Herry returned with two young Pakistani snowboarders, Hasnein Ali and Jibran Aziz, and climbed to about 5,000m in the ca 700m southwest-facing couloir that lies between Nuating III (variously reported 5,620m to 5,700m) and the first shoulder to the north (a little over 5,000m). At this point, starting from a snow mushroom, they skied and snowboarded 300m (35°–40°) back to the Biarchedi Glacier.

Between the last two descents, on May 29, Favret and Herry climbed the northeast-facing couloir that reaches the col immediately north of a rock spire, Peak 5,597m (Polish map), that lies toward the end of the long northeast ridge of Biarchedi. The base of this couloir starts from the south bank of the Baltoro Glacier, and the col is at 35°43'19.34"N, 76°25'41.38"E, with an altitude of around 5,400m. The pair stopped 30m to 50m below the couloir exit, because they assessed this last section as unskiable due to ice, accumulations of fresh snow, and a seemingly insurmountable cornice. They skied the 800m line back to the glacier (45°–50° in the upper section, 40° lower down).

— Lindsay Griffin, from information provided by Julien Herry, France, and Rodolphe Popier, Chronique Alpine, French Alpine Club

Images



Looking southwest from the couloir north of Nuating III. (A) North face of Ihakora (6,170m). (B) Biarchedi IV (6,650m). (C) Biarchedi I (6,810m). (D) Biarchedi VI (6,220m). (E) Peak 5,597m: the skied couloir reaches a col just beyond this top from the right.



Sam Favret skiing the top section of the couloir north of Peak 5,597m at the end of Biarchedi's northeast ridge.



The left of these two couloirs at the end of the long northeast ridge of Biarchedi was skied by Sam Favret and Julien Herry. Part of Peak 5,597m is visible on the left.



Ascending the Lobsang Couloir prior to a ski descent. In the background is the southwest face of Muztagh Tower.



The couloir leading to the prominent col between Nuating I (left) and II, skied by Sam Favret and Julien Herry.



Skiing and snowboarding in the couloir north of Nuating III.



Skiing and snowboarding toward the base of the couloir north of Nuating III. The formation opposite lies at the end of the long east ridge of Biarchedi VI.



A skier is just visible in the upper section of the couloir north of Peak 5,597m.

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